

Shopping Down Memory Lane

By KEITH L. MARTIN

The cool and rainy weather of last Thursday was an ideal day to go shopping in Duxbury and local historian Tony Kelso took a packed crowd at the King Caesar Barn on not only a trip through the town's various stores, but also through time.

In the third installment of the four-part King Caesar Morning Lectures, Kelso presented *Where Variety Really Means What It Says: Shopping in Duxbury 1870-1950*, a historical shopping trip that traced the early days of variety stores in town.

Kelso, who writes the "Names and Places" column for the *Clipper*, told the audience that he chose the topic of shopping because, with more of his time working from home, he is doing more and more shopping for the family and also because he personally didn't know much about how people in town used to shop.

"Old stores in Duxbury, much like the new ones, are big gathering places...and a whole social realm to themselves," he said. "I also found some really interesting reminiscences from people who remembered some of these stores from their childhood. There's something that you remember and it stays with you, so it hit me that this is one thing we all have as a common experience; going to a store."

The shopping trip through Duxbury's past went as far back as 1826 and a sign that sits at the back of the King Caesar Barn that reads "Nathan Ford and Sons English and West India Goods," from the store once located on the west side of Tremont Street in Millbrook.

Operating until it burnt to the ground in 1921, Kelso said the store was one that never really changed in the types of goods it carried while the town and the shopping environment changed around it. A display in the store dubbed it "the first department store in America," and it may have well been, carrying everything from groceries, to paper hangings (wallpaper), paint, hardware, shoes and other items.

"The juxtaposition of cheese and paper hangings just interests me and the store really hit its height in the 1850s and 1860s as it came into their own," said Kelso.



Local historian Tony Kelso chose the common experience of shopping as his topic for the latest installment of the King Caesar Morning Lecture series, held inside the King Caesar Barn.

located in the little yellow building across from Duxbury Pizza. Offering everything from "light lunches" to records, periodicals and cigarettes, it had something for everyone.

Hall's Corner was also the location of the A&P supermarket, which Kelso said he had to include in his lecture because of the current void the town faces without such a store.

"That area is one of my first memories of shopping," said Kelso. "It was all the smells of

Sam Stickney, a clerk at the Ford's Store would later open his own business in Snug Harbor in the 1840s, and later sell it to Winfield Scott Freeman who opened W.S. Freeman and Company English and West India Goods. Later, when Freeman got tired of being a retail store owner, he sold the store to his business partner Arnold who later took on a partner named Sweetser and the rest is local history.

Kelso's lecture was accompanied by many slides from the Duxbury Rural and Historical Society and as he went from image to image, mumbles of recognition were audible from many in the crowd who remembered stories of the businesses or the shops themselves.

Among those to get the biggest reactions was the old Duxbury Pharmacy on Washington Street, which Kelso said ushered in the "new wave" of shopping in Duxbury in the late 1880s. Offering goods for the beginning droves of tourists who started to visit town, the store not only offered the usual drugs and health items, but also made sure to highlight the other goods it had on its shelves in its advertisement, such as cigars, stationery and baker's confections.

From the A.M. Thayer variety store on High Street to the Corner Store on Franklin and Temple streets, Kelso continued to wow the crowd with pictures and stories of Duxbury's past, wrapping up the shopping trip in the town's current hub of activity: Hall's Corner.

The location has seen its share of stores, including Freeman's Variety Store, which was

the stores, from the smell of coffee in the A&P to the medicine smell of the pharmacy to the wonderful oil and tool smell of the hardware store. Those memories have stayed with me for a long time."

Kelso went on to show how the automobile really built Hall's Corner, but "not very well," given there are still traffic problems there today, but noted how "charming yet frustrating" the area has been for nearly eight decades.

"My hope for all of Duxbury is that we retain our small stores and keep that wonderful kind of family retail with the social aspect," he said. "You see and talk to people and it becomes more than just gathering goods. I also hope, as the old A&P used to say, we are 'thrifty and thrilled' with whoever moves into town as our new grocery store."

Town Historian Kathleen Pillsbury was one of many in the audience to enjoy Kelso's lecture and praised the local historical expert for his talk.

"Tony does a lot of research and it is always very interesting - whatever he chooses as topic is always presented with lots of information," she said. "I was especially interested in his take on Hall's Corner. Putting it in perspective like Tony did brings it alive again."

The final presentation of this season's King Caesar Morning Lectures will be held at 10 a.m. on August 19 in the King Caesar Barn. Duxbury...An Album author Norman Forgit will present Finding History Through Photographs, presenting many photographs that did not make it into his book.